



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Upper Mississippi River *National Wildlife and Fish Refuge* *Comprehensive Conservation Planning*

### Quick Facts

#### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1924
- Acres: 240,220
- Refuge covers 261 miles of Mississippi River floodplain from Wabasha, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill., and is divided into four districts:
  - Winona, MN (Pools 4-6)
  - La Crosse, WI (Pools 7-8)
  - McGregor, IA (Pools 9-11)
  - Savanna, IL (Pools 12-14)
- The refuge includes land in 19 counties across four states (MN, WI, IA, and IL)
- Refuge Manager Don Hultman, 507-453-4232

#### CCP Facts

- Forty-six public meetings and workshops
- More than 4,500 people attended the meetings and workshops
- A total of 3,230 written comments were received and considered
- Final CCP and EIS scheduled for release in July 2006
- The CCP will guide management of the refuge for 15 years
- Alternatives were significantly adjusted based on comments received from the public

#### Introduction

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge encompasses 240,000 acres in a more-or-less continuous stretch of 261 miles of Mississippi River floodplain in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. The Refuge was established by Congress in 1924 to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife, and plants. The Refuge is perhaps the most important corridor of habitat in the central U.S. due to its species diversity and abundance, and is the most visited refuge in the U.S. with 3.7 million annual visitors.

#### Comprehensive Conservation Plan

A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is being prepared to guide the administration and management of the Refuge for the next 15 years. An EIS has been prepared as part of the process, and integrates the components of a CCP (goals, objectives, and strategies) with the requirements of an EIS (alternatives, description of the environment, consequences, and comments with response).

CCPs are required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 to ensure that refuges are managed in accordance with their purposes and the mission of the Refuge System. The Refuge System is the largest collection of lands and waters in the world set aside for the conservation of wildlife, with over 540 units covering more than 95 million acres in the U.S. and its territories.

The Draft EIS/CCP was released for public review May 1, 2005, for a 120-day



comment period ending Aug. 31, 2005. Due to public input and concerns, a Supplement to the Draft (Alternative E) was developed and released Dec. 5, 2005, for a 90-day comment period ending March 6, 2006. In total, the Refuge hosted 46 public meetings and workshops during the planning process attended by 4,500 persons. An interagency planning team (state and federal) was active throughout the planning process. We also received 3,230 written comments including comments from the four states involved, the Corps of Engineers, elected officials, and 40 conservation organizations.

#### Next Step

After consideration of the comments received, a Final CCP and EIS was prepared and will be released to the public in July 2006. After a 30-day waiting period, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Midwest Regional Director will make a decision on which alternative will become the Final CCP.

For the latest information visit: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/uppermiss/>